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Arboretum News

Winter 1997/98

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50 Years of Plants and People - California Arboretum Foundation 1948-1998

Exceptional Trees of Los Angeles, *ten years after*

By Donald R. Hodel

My book *Exceptional Trees of Los Angeles*, published by the California Arboretum Foundation in 1988, recorded and illustrated exceptional trees of Los Angeles County. Trees, either single specimens or mass plantings of the same kind, were designated exceptional and included in the book because their age, size, beauty, historic or cultural value, rarity, location, or indigenous status made them stand out from all others of their kind.

Exceptional Trees of Los Angeles is really a celebration of more than 200 years of horticulture and the unusually wide variety of trees that can be grown in gardens and landscapes in the greater Los Angeles area. The variety of different trees here, about 1000 species and still counting, is perhaps unmatched in any other area of similar size in the world. The area's long and colorful horticultural legacy, beginning with the Spanish missions in the 18th century and their numerous introductions of economically important trees, such as orange, date, and olive, and continuing to the present with botanical gardens, arboreta, and avid plants people leading the charge, is partly responsible for our horticultural paradise. Playing an equally important role are the diverse climatic zones the area encompasses, ranging from frost-free, nearly tropical locations along the coast to inland desert and alpine regions, which make it possible to grow trees from nearly every corner of the globe.

The book was borne out of a concern that many of our most valuable and exceptional trees, enduring symbols of our 200-year legacy of unmatched horticultural wealth, were in danger or had already been destroyed because of continual encroaching urban sprawl or renovation and redevelopment of existing urban areas. *Exceptional Trees of Los Angeles* identified 167 trees worthy of recognition, protection, and preservation. One of the book's goals was to publicize and promote these trees, enabling their owners and the community to see them as assets and appreciate their value. Hopefully, the responsible parties would then take measures to protect and preserve the trees and include them in any development or renovation plans. Another goal was simply to increase the community's awareness of the value of landscape and greenery, especially trees, and the many benefits and amenities they provide in the urban setting.

A sampling of the specimens that *Exceptional Trees of Los Angeles* recorded and illustrated is impressive. The largest grove of king palms in the world outside their native Australian habitat is at the Virginia Robinson Gardens in Beverly Hills. The oldest and largest cape chestnut, kauri, and tipu trees in the United States, to name just a few, are at Elysian Park, the remnant of the first arboretum in Los Angeles established in the 1880s. A cedar-of-Lebanon, brought from the Holy Land to a ranch in Whittier in 1888, still stands in front of the original ranch house. The largest floss silk tree in the United States at the Bel Air Hotel behind UCLA is a spectacular sight in late September when its spreading crown is devoid of leaves and ablaze in hot pink flowers. A grapefruit tree about 150 years of age and a remnant of the first commercial citrus grove in Los Angeles still stands in the

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Exceptional Trees of LA

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Little Tokyo section of the city and still produces delicious fruits.

South Pasadena is home to a lemon-scented eucalyptus tree famous American conservationist and naturalist John Muir planted in 1889. Another eucalyptus, this one a blue gum more than 100 feet tall with a trunk 25 feet around, was planted in the 1870s on the Lankershim and Van Nuys ranch, now a city park in the San Fernando Valley. More than 100 years of age, 100 feet tall with a trunk 34 feet around, and spreading over one-quarter acre, a Moreton Bay fig in Glendora is the most massive tree in Los Angeles County, even bigger than the more famous one of the same kind at the Santa Barbara train station. Numerous native trees, including several oaks, are featured in the *Exceptional Trees of Los Angeles*. Two of the most impressive are the Encino Oak, estimated to be more than 1000 years of age and noted in the diary of a member of the Spanish expedition exploring California in 1769, and the Oak of the Golden Dream in Placerita Canyon, under which gold was discovered in 1842, six years prior to the more famous strike at Sutter's Mill in northern California.

The Arboretum of Los Angeles County is home to 14 exceptional trees, including a large planting of imposing floss-silk trees, the largest ear-pod trees in the continental United States, an exceedingly large and robust blue gum eucalyptus Lucky Baldwin planted over 100 years ago, the first and now largest yellow and pink trumpet trees introduced to California, the tallest Mexican fan palms in the world, and impressive and handsome specimens of coral tree, black walnut, dawn redwood, and bombax, to name just a few.

The above specimens and most of the remaining 167 trees are still going strong

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Holidays in the Garden

Saturday and Sunday December 6 and 7

Breakfast with Santa

Saturday, 10-noon,
South Ramada, Ayres Hall,

Includes a pancake and scrambled egg breakfast. Photos with Santa $2 or free with your own camera. General admission fees are waived with purchase of breakfast with Santa, ages 3-9, $3, 10 years and older, $5. Reservations at 626/447-8207.

Open House at the Gift Shop

Saturday and Sunday
10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

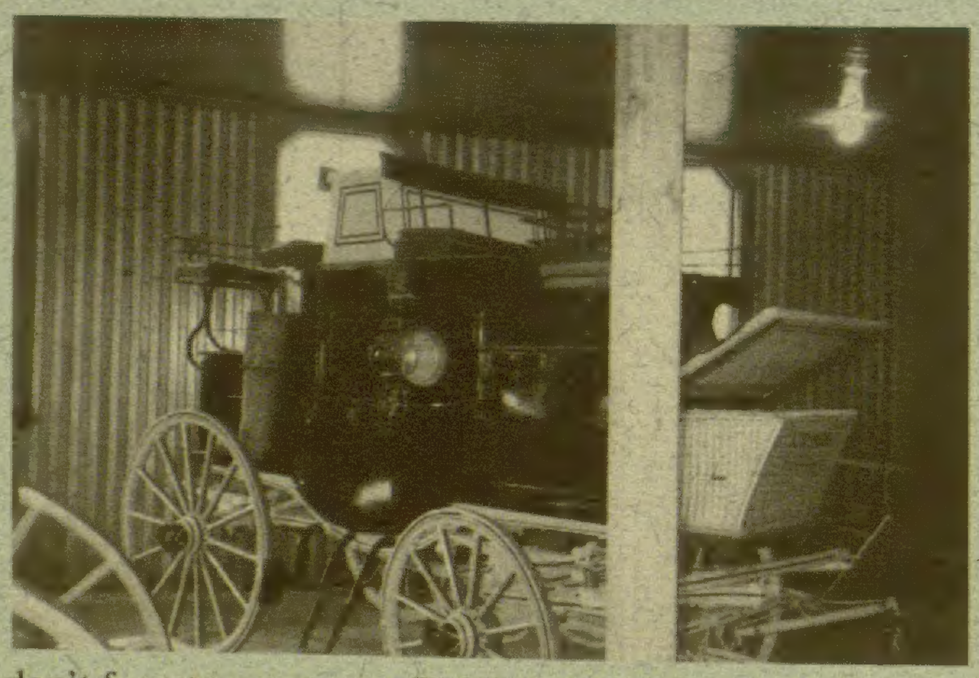
Choose among many wonderful holiday gardening gifts and special holiday crafts. Light refreshments will be served. This year the gift shop has Holiday Cards produced exclusively for you by the California Arboretum Foundation.

Queen Anne Open House and Santa in the Coach Barn

Sunday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Santa will pass out seed packets and candy canes for the children. Photos with Santa $2. Free with your own camera. Also enjoy Christmas Crafts, Complimentary Tram Rides and beginning at 11 a.m. The Hat Lady will create and decorate newspaper hats with children. Lemonade and popcorn will be available for 25¢. Arboretum fees apply on Sunday, with one child admitted free with each adult admission of $5. For more information call 626/447-8207.

ARBORETUM SIGHTINGS AND SITES



With the holiday season approaching it is only appropriate that the Arboretum is a stop for St. Nick. Some of you already know ... but where does Santa hide out when he comes to The Arboretum? This photograph should provide the clue! And ... don't forget to come see St. Nick when he returns during *Holidays in the Garden* on December 6 & 7. Write out your answer and place it in the SITES AT THE ARBORETUM box located on the information table in the entry of the Gift Shop and in the Peacock Cafe. The deadline is Jaunuary 31. Winner will be announced in the next Arboretum News.

Congratulations to the winner of the last Arboretum Sightings and Sites. The winner is Perry Minton of Rosemead. The photograph was taken in the Citrus Grove up the slope from the Santa Anita Depot.

Our Own Native Iris

by Jan Smithen, a regular contributor to the Arboretum News

Why is it that so many California beauties have to go to England before they can be appreciated back home? This is certainly the case with Pacific Coast Native Iris. They bloom in spring with flat open three-part flowers clustered on branching stems, and look like silken butterflies above their grassy foliage. If butterflies came in soft blues and lavenders as well as white, cream, soft yellow and bronze they might compete with these ruffled beauties.

Loved by gardeners in England, Australia and New Zealand, they're much ignored by most Southern California gardeners and unavailable at most nurseries. And yet, I can think of few plants that look so right at home in local gardens and are as easy to grow in our Mediterranean climate.

I've seen Pacific Coast Native iris (P.C.N.'s or Pacificas to iris lovers) growing in full sun on a dry bank in a Laguna Beach garden. But never have they looked more at home than mixed with ferns, Japanese anemones, hellebores and white azaleas under high and dappled shade in Pasadena gardens. They seem well adapted to the dry and rooty shade found at the edge of established trees and shrubs.

They make low clumps of grassy foliage which look good in combination with other Mediterranean climate plants as part of a dry landscape scheme. In early spring, slender stems rise above the foliage bearing five to ten flowers a piece in slow succession. Indeed, Pacificas will be blooming long after your daffodils are finished.

So, why aren't they in everyone's garden? Partly because they're rather hard to find.

Your local nursery might just have them when they are in bloom. If not, try the Theodore Payne Foundation Nursery, 10459 Tuxford St. Sun Valley, (818)768-1802, or Tree of Life Nursery, (retail, Fridays, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.) 33201 Ortega Highway, San Juan Capistrano, (714) 728-0685. You can sometimes find them at our own spring Baldwin Bonanza Plant sale.

There are a few named hybrid P.C.N's recommended by Southern California gardeners as being tough and easy as well as beautiful: "Canyon Snow" is white with a yellow throat, "Chimes," a soft cream, and "Banbury Cross," a blue, gold and russet combination. However, most of the plants you'll find are unnamed hybrids and these are every bit as pleasing. Look for vigorous growing plants, no matter how beautiful the flower. Some Pacificas are weak growers.

Plant them in light shade in hot inland gardens, or full sun along the coast. Amend heavy clay soil to improve the drainage in flat places or plant on a slope. They are known to revel in loose humusy soil slightly on the acid side. But in San Gabriel, Betty Kimball grows "Banbury Cross" in hard, dry rooty soil at the edge of her garden. She says it never gets any water except during winter rains.

This seems to be the secret of success. Since Pacificas are susceptible to water molds in warm, wet soils, you can lose them by too much summer irrigation. Try to plant where excess water drains well away, or in close combination with other plants whose roots will use that summer water.

Plant carefully at the same level or slightly higher than the plant was growing in the can. Water and keep shaded and moist for a while. Fertilizer is not necessary, but can be lightly applied to established plants in fall.

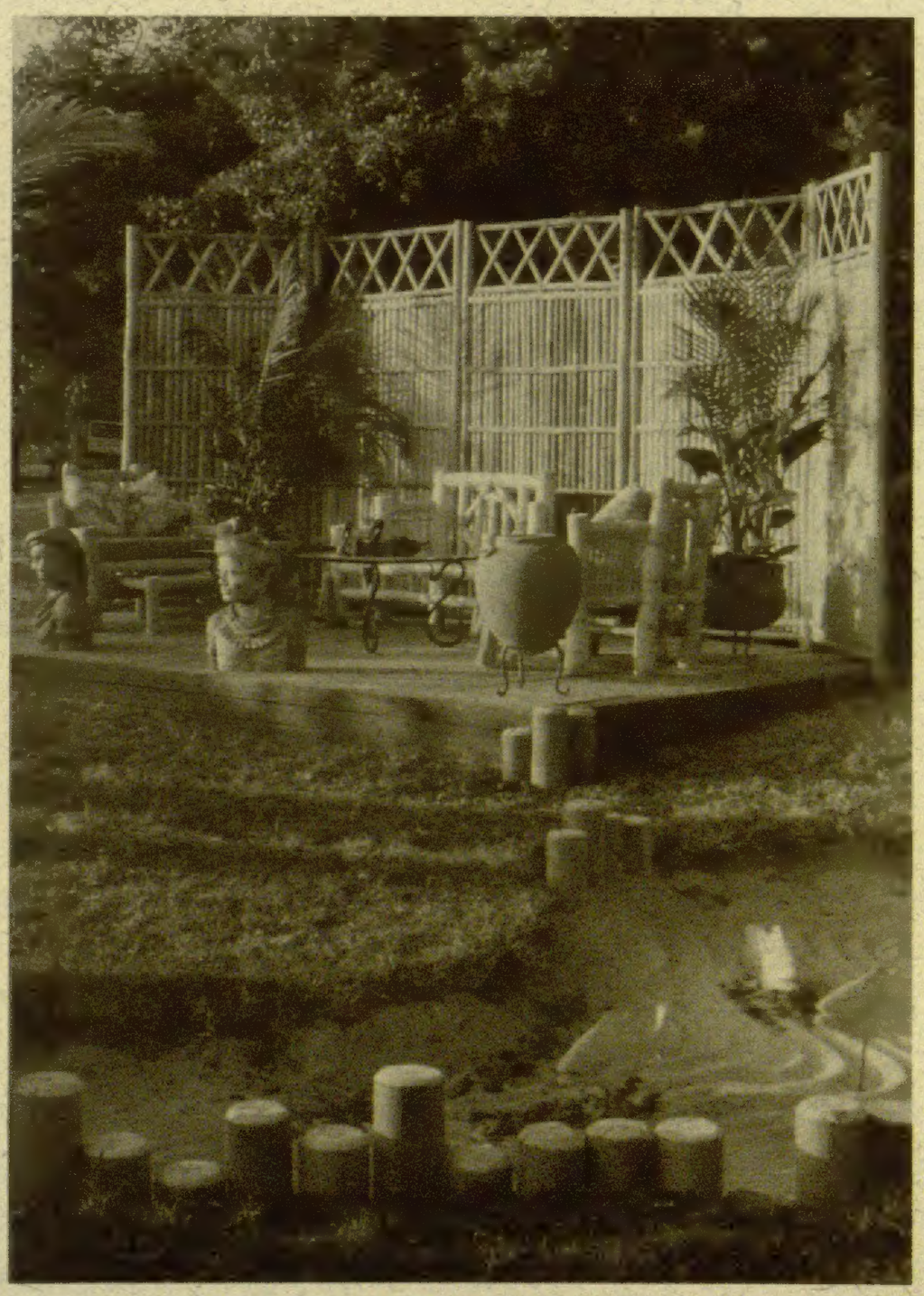
Pacific Coast iris will eventually form large clumps and after a few years many will develop empty centers as the soil is depleted. You will be tempted to lift and divide them just as soon as bloom is finished. Restrain yourself! This is their dormant period. I lost many a plant before I learned that division and re-planting will only be successful in late fall just as the new growth begins.

New little fans of leaves appear near the soil and if you dig down at their side, you'll see new white roots sprouting from pink bases on the thin rhizome. Lift the whole clump and break apart at their natural separations with your hands. Keep damp while you re-dig and amend the soil, then replant your divisions at the same level. Repeat this treatment every two or three years and your Pacificas will generously display their butterfly blooms every Spring. ❧

The 1997 Los Angeles Garden Show

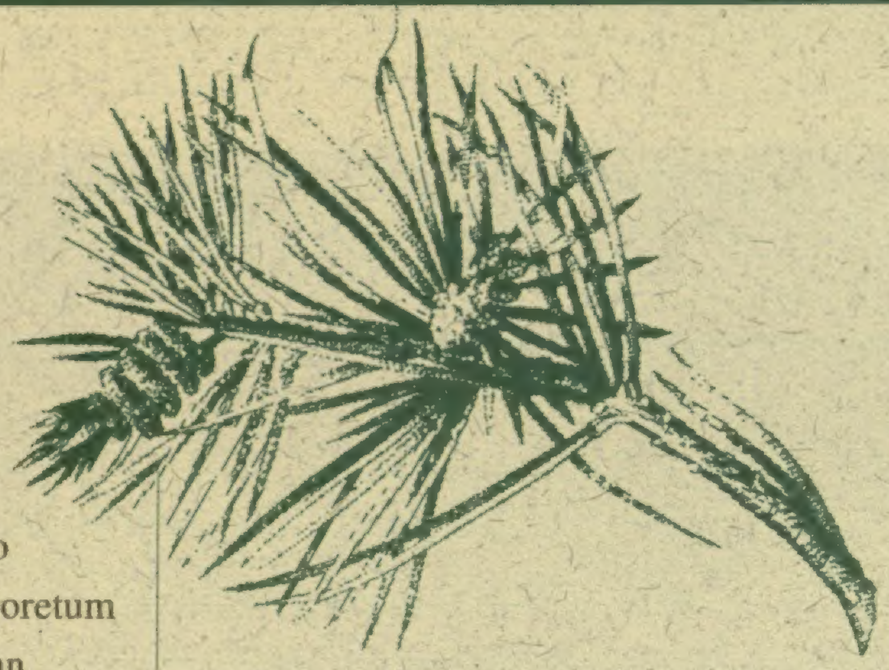
Gardens of Our World, The Oceanic and Asian Approach

The Los Angeles Garden Show was a spectacular five day annual garden event that attracted visitors from all over and featured beautiful style gardens for condominium and patio as well as more traditional settings. The Floral Pavilion sponsored by Robinsons•May featured celebrity flower arrangements by noted Southern California florists that utilized flowers from fourteen Asian and Oceanic countries. Traditional elements of the Garden Show such as The Lecture Series, The MarketPlace, the PlantMarket, the Los Angeles Times Cooking Pavilion and Designer Vignettes produced by the American Society of Interior Designers were all in place better than ever. Thank you to our sponsors Wells Fargo Bank, Lincoln Mercury, Robinsons•May and the Los Angeles Times. See you next year!



Photos by PAP

Change



The rate of change in the corporate climate is not going to slow down anytime soon. The same is true at The Arboretum. Do you find it odd to think of The Arboretum like a corporation? It is, after all, an institution with a purpose, with a product, with budgets, with consumers and staff.

The pressures on organizations to change will only increase over the next decades. Yet, the methods used, such as quality management, right-sizing, restructuring, cultural sensitivity ... all traditional and right-minded ... will falter without the appropriate marshaling of human resources. The only constant in the current 1990's environment is change, so we might as well climb aboard and take the reins.

Strategic and long range planning at The Arboretum, much of it in recent years as joint efforts between the CAF and Arboretum staffs, has always reflected a devotion to this garden that is awe-inspiring. A good example of this came from the Focus Groups conducted on Image and Vision during 1994 during which 14 people, Arboretum staff and CAF staff combined, concentrated on priorities concerning these important topics.

The participants came to consensus on such words as "valuable ... sanctuary ... warm ... dynamic ... safe ... quiet ... historical ... collections ... learning ... and botanical preserve" to describe The Arboretum, words conveying different yet accurate images. Each staff member revealed a persuasive dedication to this place of 127 acres , stressing responsibility to the public as part of a shared mission.

A wish list of vision statements also came from this group and included phrases like "guests will always leave with the enhanced appreciation of the beauty and importance of plants ... guests will come regularly to find programs to enhance their lives and a concerted effort will be made to develop programming ... guests will gather in peace and find an experience enabling them to respect and appreciate history and beauty ... The garden will be the preeminent escape from the hustle and bustle for Los Angeles County and environs."

All in agreement on the basics and more.

Powerful forces are at work today, and they will increase over time. There will be a demand for reduction in costs, improving the quality of the product we have here at The Arboretum, and improving services. These forces are a necessary fact but also an exciting one challenging us to find new opportunities for growth and productivity amongst ourselves.

And so, we look back and know that we already possess what it takes to adjust to changing conditions. The people who have already shown devotion and loyalty to this botanical museum coming into its 50th year, are here to make it happen, and they will.

Private sector support is no stranger to The Arboretum. From the early years there has been a strong legacy of both volunteer and CAF membership commitment to The Arboretum. During this time of the biennium celebration of our 50th anniversary, it is comforting to recall the intent of the many people who have given so willingly to the growth and success of The Arboretum and to know it continues today. ❧

Judy Morse
John Provine

Exceptional Trees of LA

Continued from page two

after 10 years. Some of the trees have been afforded protection and are now included in redevelopment plans. For example, four exceptional trees slated for destruction during redevelopment of the county's Rancho Los Amigos facility in Downey have been incorporated in the new development, largely because of the publicity in *Exceptional Trees of Los Angeles*. The City of Los Angeles used the book as a blueprint for developing a tree ordinance and enhancing its existing oak tree ordinance. The book has been used as a model for development of exceptional or landmark tree programs in several municipalities. Pasadena is just one example and now has an outstanding program. *Exceptional Trees of Los Angeles* has also spurred the creation of several citizen's advisory tree boards in such cities as Pasadena, Los Angeles, Santa Monica, and Redondo Beach, among others. The advisory boards increase citizen participation in government and give residents more of a voice in the planting and care of the community's trees.

There have been a few set backs since *Exceptional Trees of Los Angeles* was published 10 years ago. Natural causes have taken a few venerable specimens, including a large and historic Engelmann oak in San Marino and an equally impressive California Bay in Pomona. Unfortunately, human activity is responsible for the demise of several trees, including rare toog and plumeria tress in Whittier and a magnificent ginkgo in Pomona.

The legacy of *Exceptional Trees of Los Angeles* lives on despite these few set backs. Indeed, I periodically receive calls from people who have found a tree they feel is worthy of being designated exceptional. Perhaps soon it will be time to do a second volume of *Exceptional Trees of Los Angeles*. The California Arboretum Foundation should be proud for sponsoring and publishing this book and the contribution it has made. ❧

JUST IN TIME FOR WINTER PLANTING ... all members of the Foundation also receive a 10% at the following nurseries.

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1968 N. Lake Avenue, Altadena

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390 N. Orange Grove, Pasadena

DESERT TO JUNGLE NURSERY
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FOUR SEASON ORCHID
823 S. San Gabriel, San Gabriel

GARDEN VIEW NURSERY
12901 Lower Azusa Road, Irwindale

LAS TUNAS NURSERY
1155 E. Las Tunas Drive, San Gabriel

PLANT SYSTEM
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SAN GABRIEL NURSERY
632 S. San Gabriel Blvd, San Gabriel

SMITH & HAWKEN
519 S. Lake, Pasadena

SOUTH PASADENA NURSERY
1507 El Centro, South Pasadena

STEWART ORCHIDS
3838 Sepulveda Blvd, Culver City
3376 Foothill Blvd, Carpenteria

Wrap up your holiday shopping with the perfect holiday gift...A gift membership to The California Arboretum Foundation

- ☐ **Benefactor Member** ($1,000/year)
- ☐ **Affiliate Member** ($500/year)
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- ☐ **Garden Member** ($55/year)
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Arboretum of Los Angeles County Boxed Botanical Holiday Cards $17.95, 20 Cards and 20 Envelopes, 5 cards each of 4 different designs.

Taken from four hand-colored engravings from the 1700's and 1800's from the collection of the Plant Science Library at The Arboretum of Los Angeles County.

Published by the California Arboretum Foundation. (Of course, CAF members receive a discount!)

Visit the CAF Website at www.arboretum.org

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Judith S. Morse, Executive Director

Have you received your December, January Calendar of Events? If not, call us!

Look for your next calendar toward the end of January

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